WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS SET FOR 27th MAY, 1998

Acquisition of Land for Air-Base Station at Gandhi Nagar

1. SHRI ANANTRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the latest position of the land to be acquired for setting up of cantonment and fulfledged (Air Force) Air-Base Station at Gandhi Nagar in Gujarat;

(b)whether the acquisition has been finalised;

(c)whether the Gandhi Nagar is the right place for setting up of this cantonmcnl for western sector, and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor alongwith the total amount of grants-in-aids sanctioned from the budget so far?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (d) Government have acquired 106.25 acres of land at cost of Rs. 3,23,63, 353.00 for setting up the Headquarters of the South Western Air Command at Village Koba, Tehsil Gandhi Nagar.

There is no proposal for establishment of a Cantonment at Gandhi Nagar at present.

Interrogation of IAF Officials at Hashimara Air Base

2. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of I.A.F. officers identified so far for interrogation at Hashimara Air-Base in West Bengal and how many of them have since been interrogated;

(b)whether it is a fact that most of the said officers have been forced to agree to act of sedition and subversion by the officers manning the interrogation team; and

(c)if so, how many officers have since admitted such allegation?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Air HQ have reported that at the Court of Inquiry assembled at Hashimara, 19 officers were examined.

(b) and (c) Although Air HQ have reported that no officer has been forced to make any statement before the Court of Inquiry, two petitions have been received allegating coercion to extract confessional statements. These petitions are under examination.

Petitions alleging Hashimara Air-Base as a Torture Camp

3. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a)whether it is a fact that a large number of petitions alleging the use of Hashimara Air-Base as to torture camp to interrogate the technical officers and airmen of I.A.F., who protested against discrepancies in salary between pilots and technical staff after the increase of flying allowance last year, have been received; and

(b)if so, the number of such petitions; and the status of such petitions?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Air HQ have reported that no interrogation camp was set up at Air Force Station, Hashimara to interrogate technical officers and airmen.

According to Air HQrs., only a court of Inquiry was assembled at Hashimara from the 12th of February till the 9th of March 1998 where 19 Air Force Officers were called to tender evidence. 9 Officers were held blameworthy by the Court of Inquiry of which the contribution of two

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The sitting of the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, the 27th May, 1998 was adjourned as a mark of suspect to the memory of Shri Gyan Ranjan. Answers to Unstarred Questions put down in the lists that day were laid on the Table of the House on Thursday,, the 28th May, 1998**.**

of them was held to be of a mild nature. Out of the 7 held substantially blameworthy, petitions of 2 of them have been received. These 2 petitions are under examination.

Agitation by Coast Guard Personnel of Fifth Pay Commission Recommendations

4. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a)whether the Coast Guard Personnel have been agitating for removal of certain disparities and anomalies in their pay and allowances arising from decisions taken on the Fifth Pay Commission recommendations relating to them;

(b)if so, the details of the disparities and anomalies; and

(c)the steps taken to resolve the same?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) There have been representations from the Coast Guard personnel about their discontentment over the recommendations of the Fifth Pay Commission and the decisions taken thereon.

(b) and (c) The pay scales of Coast Guard (CG) personnel broadly correspond to the pay scales for personnel in the Central Police Organisations (CPOs) such as BSF. Whereas Coast Guard personnel have been provided the replacement scales as recommended by the Fifth Pay Commission, the pay scales of personnel of CPOs were further rationalised with effect from 10.10.97, over and above the Fifth Pay Commission awards. The implication of the aforesaid revision is under examination and a final view will be taken in consultation with the Ministry of Finance (Department of Expenditure).

Seizure of Ships with Arms and Ammunition

5. PROF. RAM KAPSE: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a)whether it is a fact that the ~)oast Guards of Indian Navy have seized ships containing arms and ammunition in the sea near Andaman and Nicobar Islands recently,

(b)if so, the details of the action taken by Government; and

(c)if the action has not been completed so far, by when it would be completed?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) In a combined Services operation conducted by the Army, Navy, Air Force and the Coast Guard in the Andaman l Nicobar Islands on the 10/11 February, 1998, 73 gunrunners, two gun boats and two trawlers containing arms and ammunition were captured.

(b) and (c) The Central Bureau of Investigation has been entrusted with the responsibility of investigation of the case which is subjudice.

Spying on Indian War-ships

6. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a)whether Government are aware of the spying on Indian war-ships by Australian surveillance aircrafts;

(b)if so, since when the spying is going on;

(c)whether Government have lodged any protest to Australian Government on the matter; and

(d)if so, reaction of the Australian Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) Five incidents of surveillance of Indian warships by Australian